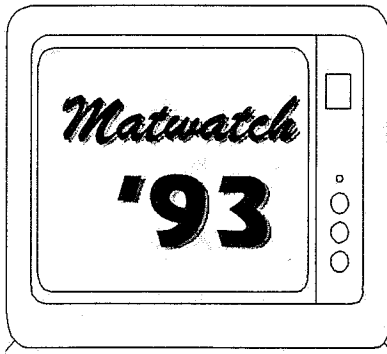




It's Gone Too Far

In the beginning, you had your good guys and your bad guys. They locked up, pulled hair, pulled trunks, insulted each other at mikeside and struggled to make livings, albeit at the whim of some shady promoters. We watched. Things were fairly simple.

The decade of the national renaissance of pro wrestling as a complex, multimillion dollar, merchandised-and-licensed ensemble drama crossed into the depth of decadence with the bloody brawl in a Blackburn, England hotel between Sid Eudy (Vicious) and Marty Lunde (Arn Anderson).

In the past ten years, we have seen celebrities align themselves with pro wrestling, television stations carry wrestling five nights a week, wrestlers become movie and mainline television performers, wrestling pave the way for television to become a serious pay-per-view industry, America's most prolific cablecaster become an owner of a wrestling company and six-figure to multimillion dollar salaries.

Likewise, we have seen acknowledgements of steroid abuse, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, rampant promiscuity, alleged child abuse, alleged homosexual scandals, charges of rape, wrestlers perpetually no-showing cards, men physically abusing women in storylines, the industry's biggest star refusing on a national talk show to acknowledge his link to steroids as anything more than medication, an attempted murder in a filmed angle, racism and more racism, a telephone hotline in which a program host attempts to make fun and games of the sexual habits of Ric Flair and Arn Anderson, a lampoon of mental illness, a nationally-embarrassing trial which points a finger at the mat industry's top group as a focal point of steroid use and a two-year federal investigation into the same organization which may or may not result in damaging indictments.

As distasteful as every one of the aforementioned dives into decadence are, this industry is clearly out of fathomable control when two grown men allow tensions, regardless of who started it and why, to lead to their mutually stabbing each other an estimated two dozen times. Even more incredible is the apparent lack of quick action by World Championship Wrestling executives, in the week their Turner Broadcasting-owned company turns five years old, to exercise any measurable discipline, at least publicly at this writing Nov. 5, over either Eudy or Lunde. That inaction is particularly inexplicable in the wake of past firings or suspensions within WCW (see left column) for incidents less serious than a public stabbing melee.

Several key questions remain unanswered at deadline, none of which WCW officials appear interested in addressing for any wrestling or mainline journalist, many of whom have besieged the office:

---Why was this troupe sent on an overseas tour with only a single road agent---an active performer (Bill Dundee), at that---who has never been known as a tough disciplinarian?

---If tensions between Eudy and Lunde originated on a bus traveling from Wales to Blackburn, why weren't stronger measures taken to separate the two, even to the point of sending one home, before the bloodfest?

---Was either man under the influence of alcohol at the time of the physical confrontation? At least two London newspapers reported the two exhibited tensions at a bar.

(Continued on Page 2)

Ted's Team at Five

How Does One Get the Boot?

While the feet continue to pat over whether to fire two men who attempted to kill each other in England, the dichotomy is stark in past disciplinary action for lesser actions since Ted Turner's purchase of World Championship Wrestling:

***April 1989: Barry Windham fired by Jim Herd after questions raised about the legitimacy of a wrist injury.

***September 1989: Paul Heyman (Paul E. Dangersi?) fired for a public shouting match with then-booker Ric Flair, though Heyman wins a legal challenge to return.

***Spring 1990: Michael Hayes receives 30-day suspension for alleged drug test failure.

***Spring 1990: Chris Cruise fired as host of *World Wide Wrestling* after refusing to work a taping with Kevin Sullivan as co-host.

***Fall 1990: Art Barr fired as *The Juicer* after Oregon newspapers blast a judge for allowing Barr to work while still under probation for a sex charge.

***October 1991: Paul Heyman suspended for 20 days for allegedly revealing planned joint WCW-USWA card, a charge Heyman denied.

***January 1992: Herd fired for demanding Dusty Rhodes' dismissal as WCW booker.

***Fall 1992: Heyman placed under investigation for alleged misrepresenting personal expenses, a charge Heyman denied.

***February 1993: Bill Watts fired for several undisclosed reasons, including published racial viewpoints.



It's Gone Too Far

(Continued from Page 1)

---Was another party involved in exacerbating explosiveness between the two men? Simple common sense dictates this kind of explosion between two adults doesn't just erupt over the immature arrogance and taunting over the size of one man's contract over another and the suggestion of retirement, as has been reported in several quarters.

---Once the news reached Atlanta, why didn't WCW president Bill Shaw dispatch someone at the executive level of himself or executive vice president Bob Dhue immediately by plane to England to personally investigate? Where the potential of death was involved, this dictated more than surrogate supervision, if for nothing more than the potential legal vulnerability of the company. Or was Shaw hoping since neither Eudy or Lunde died, maybe the problem would go away and not make the mainline U.S. newspapers?

---How has the current state of the company's management contributed to these tensions? A management which, other than influencing a slight upward turn in the flagship Saturday night television show's ratings, has bumbled its way through the past 19 months worse than Jimmy Carter handled the Iran hostage crisis. Further, has that management allowed selected personnel to dodge WCW drug testing, as many analysts have speculated?

---Has WCW remotely considered hiring or retaining a psychologist to deal with the often-erratic emotions of its personnel to diffuse explosions before they become Blackburn Brawls?

---Why has the company been so closed-mouthed about its disciplinary intentions more than one week after the incident, when the situation cries out for firm, fast and decisive action as a message to its employees and the entire Turner organization. As talk has been in some quarters of Turner, if a similar blowup had occurred with any other pair of employees in TBS, they would have been instantly fired. Most standard Turner contracts contain behavior clauses which indicate employees may be fired "for any reason or no reason."

Is USWA Headed Off WMC-TV?

MEMPHIS---*Matwatch '93* has learned new ownership of NBC affiliate WMC-TV, which has carried Jerry Jarrett's *Championship Wrestling* for more than 15 years, is considering dropping the show from its Saturday morning lineup.

The only weekly live mat series remaining in America, the USWA show continues to perform respectably in its 10-11:30 a.m. time slot.

However, in an Oct. 29 conversation with some key WMC executive personnel who asked not to be named, *Matwatch '93* was told new WMC owner Bert Ellis is less than enamored with the image of wrestling and is planning massive changes within the station.

Already, veteran general manager Ron Klayman and the station's general sales manager have departed. More personnel changes are expected.

Ellis, who paid a reported \$85 million for the station, reportedly told station executives he no longer intends to pay Jarrett a licensing fee to produce the series and would require Jarrett to pay all future production costs in 1994.

If enacted, the move would save the station an estimated \$50,000 a year. Jarrett reportedly has been advised to investigate other television outlets in Memphis.

By the time this issue reaches *Matwatch '93* readers, a specific decision may have been reached concerning Eudy and Lunde. However, the lack of quick action leaves one to consider most seriously the leadership of Shaw, an executive with an impeccable reputation as the head of human resources for Turner Broadcasting. But, likewise, a man who has made some the most puzzling decisions or non-decisions in his tenure as WCW chief.

In the five years WCW has been a subsidiary of TBS, the company has been maligned, at times unfairly, for its performance. However, the truth is the division has been an embarrassment and albatross for a majority of rank-and-file Turner employees and executives. Clearly, the company exists only at the whim of Ted Turner, himself, who still sees wrestling as the date which brought him to the dance of broadcast success in 1972.

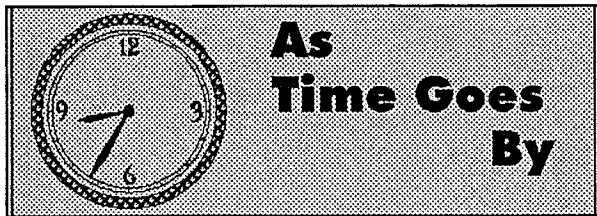
Overreaction? Consider again: two men are lucky they did not die at their own hands the night of Oct. 27. Had that happened...and well it could have...newspapers all over America would have pounced on the story. That, in itself, should demand Turner---at the very least---appoint a panel of his top executives independent of WCW to investigate the performance of this company in areas other than its finances. The ultimate determination should be whether wrestling is a business TBS should continue to operate. Some of us already believe we know the answer.

THE REAL WRESTLING HOTLINE

Meltzer (M-W-F) Beverly (Tu-Sa)

Hudson (Th) Madden (Su)

1-900-903-9030



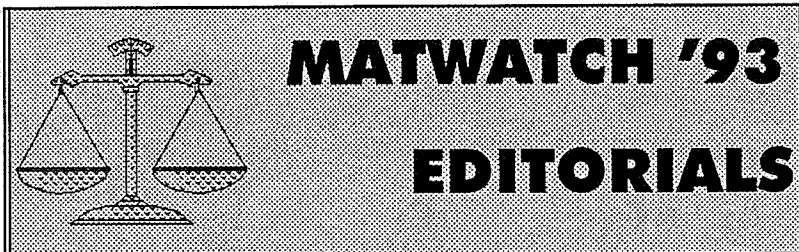
Don't expect the "split hour" of WCW *Saturday Night* in the form widely discussed over the summer. The improvement in the overall Saturday evening ratings, one of the few bright spots for WCW, negates the need for drastic format changes....But what still has to be a question mark is the performance of WCW *Main Event*. We'll soon expand on this but while the show only averaged a 1.7 opposite NFL football last year, the overall performance is abysmal. A Todd Champion-Steve Regal feud during the November rating sweeps is hardly revival medicine.

A block of stations is weekly recording the Jim Ross *Radio WWF* show by satellite to consider its potential. Station execs are said far more favorable to some of the controversial interviews in recent weeks....Could someone explain why Chris Cruise isn't used on WCW pay-per-view shows?....Smoky Mountain Wrestling now skedded for a mid-November debut on Channel America, available to a network of low-power and small independent stations and satellite dish owners.

New to The Real Wrestling Hotline: Charleston, S.C., columnist Mike Mooneyham on Option 2 Mondays and veteran Pittsburgh pundit Mark Madden on Option 1 Sundays. John Arezzi moves to Option 2 Wednesdays.... John Clark's recent four-part interview with Eddie Gilbert on TRWH was his best series of segments yet. Eddie was candid about everything from Ric Flair to his marriage to Missy Hyatt to his future in the industry.

Again, some reports of tech problems during *Halloween Havoc*. Memphis cable was down for the first match-and-a-half and systems in Alabama and west Florida reported sporadic outages....Joe Pedicino and Boni Blackstone under consideration for an all-sports nighttime talk radio fest on WCNN in Atlanta. They've done three pilot shows... Speaking of Boni, she is apparently being released from her Titan Sports contract but had to call Connecticut to learn her status. As one of the few women treated with respect on a mat show, Boni deserved better.

Jeff Jarrett's feature vignettes on WWF TV will continue a slow rollout until his scheduled full-time debut in January....Some computer bulletin boards report Jimmy Hart headed back to WWF but I'm told no.... ESPN2's Global airings are, frankly, a joke. They're all repeats from the original *Super-card* series on ESPN and recent shows for syndication. At least the early Global shows remind us of the promise the group had and showcase the solid announce team of Craig (Jon Horton) Johnson and Scott Hudson.



BE DONE WITH STUN GUN



Obviously, the creative powers behind World Championship Wrestling are out of touch with recent developments in Washington concerning excesses in televised violence. Developments drawing the attention of the attorney general.

The brutality of the Cactus Jack-Vader main event during *Halloween Havoc* was as intense as any depicted on American mat television. In one respect, the degree of violence was expected, considering the storyline and competitive traits of the two performers. Likewise, the style of performance probably lifted the spirits of traditional NWA hardcore fans.

However, Harley Race's use of a police stun gun to subdue Cactus Jack crosses what we feel is a dangerous and unacceptable barrier in the introduction of weapons to wrestling, particularly in the message to elements of the audience predisposed to use such weapons.

For the unenlightened, a stun gun is used by law enforcement officers to briefly shock, paralyze and subdue antagonistic crime suspects. However, as any officer will admit, unskilled use of a stun gun can cause far greater harm.

Perhaps the creative brass at WCW missed attorney general Janet Reno's testimony before Sen. Ernest Hollings' (D-S.C.) panel four days before *Havoc*. While predominantly directing her remarks at prime time network television, Reno said, "Let's give the networks until January to clean up the violence from their schedules. If they don't, we will consider regulations to force them to do so."

Matwatch '93 opposes government regulation of television content in any form; however, we strongly suggest programmers such as WCW have failed to exercise self-discipline, taste and discernment when the use of a stun gun is inserted into a pay-cablecast. As The Real Wrestling Hotline's Scott Hudson said the night of *Halloween Havoc*, "The stun gun may be 1993's version of the plastic bag (used by Terry Funk on Ric Flair during a 1989 *Clash*). That and the violence in that main event certainly won't sell tickets or pay-per-view subscriptions. It may, however, drive away people who have parents already concerned about five-year-olds committing murder after watching *Beavis and Butt-Head*."

Further, WCW is clearly pushing the envelope with the publicly-stated philosophy of its own boss. In early summer, Ted Turner told a Washington panel Congress needs to impose tougher guidelines on the television networks "and ram it down their throats," when it comes to violence. Though *Halloween Havoc* indeed may be "just wrestling," few can argue the impact and message of the violence of its main event. Based on his public testimony, Turner should personally be embarrassed by it. *Matwatch '93* calls on WCW to ban the use of the stun gun and any similar weapons from its presentations. Additionally, WCW executives would be wise to rein in such creative directions from booker Virgil Runnels, never one to pay attention to authority. The type of violence displayed in the finale of *Halloween Havoc* clearly places Turner in the position of owning a subsidiary with people who do not practice what he preaches.

THE RATINGS PAGE

CABLE WRESTLING RATINGS

Averages for Oct.*	Rating/Share	Total Homes	Sept. Avg.
Monday Night Raw	2.9/4.1	1.741 million	2.2/3.2
WCW Saturday Night	2.2/4.5	1.314 million	2.2/5.3
WWF All-American	2.0/5.6	1.204 million	2.1/5.6
WCW Main Event	1.5/3.0	896,000	1.6/3.6
WCW Power Hour	1.4/5.8	850,000	1.6/6.9
WWF Mania	1.3/4.0	778,000	1.2/5.0

Week Ending Oct. 4	Rating/Share	Total Homes	Nat. Rank
Monday Night Raw (10/4)	2.9/4.1	1.232 million	11
WWF All-American (10/3)	2.0/6.1	1.232 million	36
WCW Saturday Night (10/2)	1.7/3.8	1.035 million	N/A
WCW Power Hour (10/2)	1.6/7.1	971,000	N/A
WWF Mania (10/2)	1.3/4.2	800,000	N/A
WCW Main Event (10/3)	1.2/2.7	728,000	N/A

Week Ending Oct. 11

Monday Night Raw (10/11)	2.9/4.1	1.758 million	15
WCW Saturday Night (10/9)	2.3/4.7	1.401 million	T33
WWF All-American (10/10)	2.1/6.0	1.292 million	40
WCW Main Event (10/10)	1.7/3.8	1.035 million	N/A
WWF Mania (10/9)	1.2/3.7	737,000	N/A

Week Ending Oct. 18

Monday Night Raw (10/18)	3.0/4.3	1.85 million	3
WCW Saturday Night (10/16)	2.3/4.8	1.414 million	T26
WWF All-American (10/17)	1.9/5.1	1.135 million	N/A
WCW Power Hour (10/16)	1.4/5.5	855,000	N/A
WCW Main Event (10/17)	1.4/2.6	853,000	N/A
WWF Mania (10/16)	1.2/4.0	756,000	N/A

Week Ending Oct. 25

Monday Night Raw (10/25)	2.9/4.1	1.741 million	N/A
WCW Saturday Night (10/23)	2.1/4.5	1.267 million	T34
WWF All-American (10/24)	1.8/5.2	1.156 million	N/A
WCW Main Event (10/24)	1.6/3.0	967,000	N/A
WWF Mania (10/23)	1.3/4.0	818,000	N/A
WCW Power Hour (10/22)	1.2/4.9	726,000	N/A

* Covers the month through the week ending Oct. 25. All but *Monday Night Raw* lack the final Oct. 30-31 weekend ratings for the final averages.

THE REAL WRESTLING HOTLINE

Now on Option 2.....

Mike Mooneyham (Mon)
Scott Hudson on WCW (Tue)
John Arezzi (Wed)
John Clark (Thu)
Dennis Brent (Sat)
Georgiann Makropoulos (Sun)

1-900-903-9030

WHAT THEY MEAN

The October numbers more than point out how *Monday Night Raw* has become the unquestioned broadcast of record in cable pro wrestling. After the sluggish September, damaged by three weeks of pre-emptions, *Raw* reverted to an October rating even higher than its strong 2.8 third quarter average. More significant is its strength against a difficult schedule of ABC NFL games, among the national Nielsen top ten for the season.

While only matching its September average, the *WCW Saturday Night* rating has to be considered a plus for not losing ground against an impressive schedule of ABC regional and ESPN national college football. However, the performance of the Sunday show only points how viewers are increasingly voting for only one show per week on TBS. The ratings track could indicate a stronger Saturday performance would develop if the Sunday (down to an all-time low 1.5 monthly average) were dropped. However, the 1.5 is only 12 per cent down from 1992's fourth quarter average of 1.7 for *WCW Main Event*.

WWF Mania, up 8%, was the only morning show to post an increase. Both *Power Hour* and *WWF All-American* (seen mornings in most of the country) registered declines. Some format tinkering may be in order for *All-American*, which is facing an onslaught of NFL games and pre-game shows.

THE SPECIALS

The betting line has to be for the USA Network's *Survivor Series Showdown* to post the strongest showing of the month's two specials, although a strong ESPN game opposite could damage that threat. The card for *WCW's Clash of the Champions* is the strongest---on paper---in recent history. However, the show will face the challenge of television's number one show, *Home Improvement*, and the film *Dances with Wolves*. Regardless, the special will be a significant indicator whether the August *Clash* rebound was a one-show fluke or a positive trend.

FINAL NOTES

Talk of Jim Crockett's World Wrestling Network appearing on the Channel America network mounts but that exposure will be non-threatening to the big two. Channel America only goes to dish owners, low-power stations and small-town independents....That network, however, provides Jim Cornette's Smoky Mountain Wrestling Wednesdays at 11 p.m. (EST) in the same week of its syndication airing....Ratings are not available for the Global reruns on ESPN2, as the service is not yet available in 15 million homes, the necessary figure for Nielsen measurement....Late word: for the weekend ending Nov. 1, *WCW Saturday Night* upset *Monday Night Raw*, 3.0/5.8 to 2.8/4.1. Obviously, curiosity watchers wanted to see if WCW would acknowledge the Anderson-Vicious incident. *Main Event* scored 2.1/3.6.

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Final Chapter

My Life on the WCW Hotline

F

or years, I had been told of two sides to Bill Watts. One was of the tough-minded, yet, innovative businessman who developed the most widely-acclaimed television wrestling show of the mid-1980s among hardcore viewers. The other was of an impulsive, irrational administrator who ruled with tyranny. Eddie Gilbert swore by Watts. Jim Herd, while publicly professing admiration of Watts' talent, wanted no part of him.

When Watts, upon his ascension to the WCW operations chief's office, was eventually told a former newsletter writer--namely, me--was on his hotline (told by his chief deputy Ole Anderson who never cared for me), Watts gave the order to "fire the s.o.b." Then, he took a look at the financial numbers from my Tuesday night hotline and paused. He ordered tapes of three segments of 900 *Matwatch* and determined my work was fine, much to the consternation of Anderson. My phone rang on a Tuesday morning last year. Watts was on the line. "I'll tell you the truth, the minute I heard we had a sheetwriter on this hotline, I wanted you off," said Watts. "But after I listened, I understood the concept and I don't agree with those who say you're trying to destroy our company." When I told Watts how assorted WCW personnel felt about me, particularly Anderson, he responded, "Ole's Ole. He blows off a lot of steam but let me worry about him."

UWFI: A Decent Start?

LOS ANGELES--Media publication *Buy-Rate* estimates a strong start for the UWFI "shoot-kick" pay-per-view.

A spot-check of the 60 largest pay-cable markets indicates an 0.48 per cent buy rate, or 108,000 of the 22.5 million homes available for pay-per-view.

The newsletter's estimate does not take into account smaller, rural markets, which typically post lower subscription rates than urban areas.

WXIA Probes Steroid Scandal

ATLANTA---An apparently-burgeoning murder/drug scandal in suburban Atlanta may have connections to pro wrestling, according to NBC affiliate WXIA-TV.

In an investigative report on its 5 p.m. edition of *11 News* Oct. 15, the station linked the probe of an early 1993 slaying to a distribution network of drugs, including steroids. According to the report, the investigation is focusing on "a number of professional and amateur athletes, who may be connected, including some members of the Atlanta Falcons, at least five area high school football coaches and people with prominent ties to professional wrestling."

The report did not name specific names of athletes being questioned but suggested their link is to steroids. The story has been further detailed in recent issues of *The Atlanta Constitution*.

Watts was probably the most complex individual ever to sit in the COO's chair of WCW. He was faced with a commission to undo the free-spending habits of his predecessor, Kip Frey. That, in itself, would be unpopular with WCW personnel. However, the apparent intimidation and breakdown tactics used by Watts in renegotiating valid money contracts go against the grain of every style of positive personnel management I have ever learned.

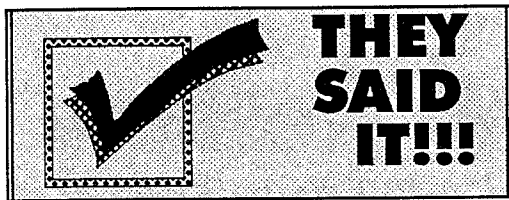
Personally, the man treated me well and we never crossed swords. He asked if I would emcee a series of alternate option hotline segments to give him a chance to answer insider newsletter criticisms. I agreed, even though I knew it would not be popular with the editors. Let the man have his forum, be he right or wrong. Newsletter publishers already had theirs. I didn't agree with two-thirds of Watts' answers but will to this day defend his right to express himself.

I would deliberately ask questions about the status of Paul E. Dangerously (Paul Heyman), who locked horns with Watts almost from the cowboy's first step in the building. Reportedly under investigation, Heyman had already won two legal battles with WCW. Gut feeling told me even the formidable Watts would lose to Heyman because Paul, coming from a legal family, was as shrewd as I've ever seen in legally protecting himself. True to my intuition, Heyman was recording every Watts interview segment from his New York home.

Last January, I spent a full day in the WCW Atlanta office. Among the topics I discussed with Watts was the accelerated push of his son Erik to topline status, much faster than the slow rollouts of Terry Funk and Robert and Ron Fuller, all second-generation stars, in the 1960s. I recognized quickly the question was too sensitive. What I didn't know was Watts was under intense pressure from his creative team, including Jim Ross, to turn Erik heel because of the intense booing and catcalls the young Watts was already receiving on national television. Bill was resisting and had, in fact, just come from a shouting match with his booking committee.

What I noticed in the Atlanta office that day was a casualness of attire which seemed out of step with the Turner image. Watts was tieless, looking more prepared to step on the back of a Harley-Davidson. Several other key WCW staffers were in sport shirts. I remembered the definitive dress code Jim Herd enforced when he was in charge of WCW. Ironically, the two

(Continued on Page 6)



The Best of October

1. Bobby Heenan/Vince McMahon, *Monday Night Raw*: (BH) "Jim Cornette's mother is a close friend of the second woman on the Supreme Court---Ruth Vader Ginzburg." (VM) "Who was the first?" (BH) "Diana Ross." 2. Eddie Gilbert, *The Real Wrestling Hotline*: "If I ever get married again and I doubt I will, she won't be in wrestling and probably from Lexington, Tennessee." 3. Brian Christopher/Tony Falk, *USWA*: (BC) "Tony, you're the worst wrestler I've ever seen." (TF) "If you'd concentrate less on women and more on wrestling, you'd be a lot better off." 4. Heenan, *MNR*: "Julia Roberts, I hear, is expecting. I wonder if Booger knows." 5. McMahon, *MNR*: "This is not the Nashville Network and I'm not Tom Bodette." 6. Scott Hudson, *TRWH*, on *Halloween Havoc*: "Just cookie-cutter booking, from top to bottom." 7. Jesse Ventura, *WCW Worldwide*: "The Masked Assassin looks more svelte than I can ever remember." 8. Ventura, *Worldwide*: "What a great job Fifi has---to spend her life as an ornament!" 9. Rex Hargrove, *USWA*, to Jeff Gaylord: "The University of Missouri. Is that a barber college?" 10. Heenan, *MNR*, on 1-2-3 Kid/Jannetty double kip-up: "The June Taylor Dancers." 11. Jim Cornette, *MNR*, on Tatanka: "Tatonto: the Vanishing American." 12. Hudson, *TRWH*: "Eric Bischoff has given new meaning to the words 'great human being.'"

Strongest Comments

1. Bret Hart, *WWF*: "If you've seen Ric Flair wrestle once, you've seen him a million times. Uncreative, unimaginative---he is the pits! On a scale of 1-to-10, I'd rate him about a three." 2. Hart, "(WCW's) drug testing must be pretty shoddy because you can take one look at all of their people and see they're drug addicts." 3. Gilbert, *TRWH*, on Flair: "I know the person behind the myth. When power and greed take over, nothing can stand in the way of him getting control." 4. Gilbert, *TRWH*: "Wrestling is a fantasy world. A lot of people don't understand that or accept it." 5. McMahon, *MNR*, on Booger-Ramon: "I'm glad that lethargic affairs is over." 6. Hudson, *TRWH*: "The Cactus-Vader match won't fill arenas or draw

(Continued in opposite column)

Hotline Life

(Continued from Page 5)

front office people I saw in coats and ties were Virgil Runnels and Al Rogowski. That, in itself, appeared to paint an eerie picture for Watts' future. Watts introduced me, at various times, to WCW president Bill Shaw and executive vice president Bob Dhue, who asked my view about their direction.

Watts told me during an hour-long conversation he felt the gig was up, wrestling as we traditionally knew it could not be turned around to past successes with a 1990s audience. Bill had another idea he wanted to sell to Ted Turner---a team wrestling concept with franchises featuring top-line amateur wrestlers competing with rules which would skirt the edge of crossing into the pro philosophy. But Watts was having a hard time getting an audience with Turner---which, in itself, should have sounded an alarm. Less than two months later, Watts was gone after his past published remarks on race filtered into TBS.

I firmly expected my gig to be up with Ole Anderson taking over Watts' post. Lance was still handling voiceovers for the hotline and consulting with WCW for the service but he did not have the influence of previous years.

I told Dennis Brent, who was the in-house hotline supervisor, if he felt a need to make a change, no hard feelings. The next week, Dennis was told abruptly of his dismissal.

My phone rang on a Monday evening as I was preparing to leave to teach a night class. "Steve," the voice said. "This is Sharon Sidello. I just wanted to chat for a few minutes." I firmly expected she was calling to boot me from the hotline. However, the conversation began what would be fourteen weeks which revealed much of the true nature of the inner organization of World Championship Wrestling. That story in the finale next month.

Strongest Comments

(Cont. from opp. col.)

new pay-per-view subscribers. It may, however, drive away subscribers with parents cringing over five-year-olds burning each other after watching *Beavis and Butt-Head*."

The Rest of October

MOST IMPROVED - Radio WWF, for controversial content.

DREADED GLITCH AWARDS

1. WCW, for innumerable incorrect supers on *Halloween Havoc*. 2. WCW, for *Main Event* interview with Nasty Boys yelling they'll get belts back from Scorpio and Bagwell while Knobbs is swinging the belt around in his hand.

BOO AWARDS - 1. USWA, for several continued instances of Koko B. Ware hitting and abusing women. 2. WCW, for dragging its feet on decisively resolving the Sid Vicious-Arn Anderson issue. 3. WCW, for use of stun gun.

MATWATCH
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Five-Count Indictment



Lawler Faces Rape Charge



authorities in Indiana were expected either this week or early next to add to a five-count felony indictment in Kentucky against veteran wrestler Jerry (the King) Lawler.

Lawler was accused by a Jefferson County (Louisville), Ky., grand jury Nov. 12 of one count of second-degree rape, three counts of second-degree sodomy, and one count of harrassing a witness. The alleged incidents occurred June 6 and July 7 in Louisville hotels, according to testimony. Lawler is accused of having sex with a 13-year-old girl. Testimony came from 17 witnesses, including the 13-year-old and another 14-year-old, who both testified of having sexual relations with Lawler in Louisville and in Sellersburg, Ind., a Louisville suburb (on May 26). Both girls were said to be regularly in attendance at Lawler's USWA cards.

Immediately, Lawler denied the charges. In a statement to reporters outside the courtroom, Lawler said, "The King is fighting back. This is not true and I have a taped telephone conversation to prove it." Lawler told WLKY-TV in Louisville, which broke the story, and WMC-TV in Memphis he voluntarily testified before the grand jury "but was only allowed to answer a couple of questions."

Detective Dan Crump of the Clark County, Ind., Sheriff's Department is conducting a similar investigation into allegations Lawler and preliminary wrestler Bill Marino (Bill Martin) were involved in sexual encounters with minors in Indiana. *Matwatch '93* has spoken with two people expected to testify in that investigation who say the case could go to the Clark County grand jury "before Thanksgiving."

Lawler is scheduled for a Nov. 22 arraignment in Louisville, where he is expected to plead not guilty. He immediately launched a high-profile public relations defense, first on the WMC-TV *USWA Championship Wrestling* show Nov. 13, where he told viewers, "I've been wrestling here (in Memphis) for 23 years. My family lives here. You've known me for a long time and you know the kind of person I am. I can guarantee you these charges are absolutely not true and if I have to go to court to prove it, I will." Later the same day, he told the station's *Action News 5*, "This all started as girl talk. Two people who were bragging to their friends about their supposed sexual conquests. Eventually, my name was dropped into the conversation. The story spread, then that led to the investigation, which led to the indictments."

The 43-year-old Lawler, who was to be the prime focus of Thanksgiving Eve's *Survivor Series*, was immediately placed on "hiatus" (a suspension without pay) by the World Wrestling Federation. WWF editors spent three days eliminating him from episodes scheduled this weekend (Nov. 20-21) and the Sunday evening *Survivor Series Showdown* on USA Network.

Bruce Prichard as Rio Rogers, a Dusty Rhodes parody character, replaces Lawler as Vince McMahon's co-host on *Superstars of Wrestling*. Shawn Michaels will sub for Lawler on the pay-per-view card.

The indictments come on the heels of stories new WMC-TV owner Bert Ellis intends to cease funding production costs for the weekly live USWA program after the first of the year. Ellis is expected to look negatively on USWA host Dave Brown, who doubles as the weather anchor on the WMC-TV news team, appearing alongside Lawler while the veteran star remains under a cloud. Lawler teamed with son Brian Christopher in a Mid-South Coliseum match Monday.